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April 15, 2011

Honorable Kenneth Salazar
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar;

On behalf of the citizens of the State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources Secretary Cathy Stepp and I applaud the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the much anticipated announcement to remove gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes area – which includes Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin – from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

This important decision will finally untie our hands so we can start rebuilding public confidence in the state and federal efforts toward wolf conservation and wildlife management.

We have long maintained wolves have recovered in this area and no longer require the protection of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Indeed, wolves were down-listed on the state list to “threatened” in 1999, and removed from the state Threatened and Endangered Species list in 2004. Federal delisting affirms that wolves in the Western Great Lakes area have exceeded recovery goals and continue to thrive. In fact, wolf numbers total more than 4,000 animals in the three core recovery states.

Wisconsin’s 2011 wolf count is currently being tabulated, and we expect the count to reflect yet another new population record for the state. The number of wolves is already more than double our established population goal. The only U.S. states with more wolves than Wisconsin are Alaska and Minnesota. A recent Wisconsin Wildlife Federation petition signed by 36,739 residents suggests, the public had grown weary of delays and widely endorses delisting.

We believe transferring management of wolves to the state will allow better control of the population, especially problem animals, and will provide needed protections for livestock and pet owners.

The public expects us to manage wolves at a reasonable and sustainable level, and we are committed to doing that. Wolves are a symbol of the wild and an indicator of quality habitat. We are eager to assume our proper role in management of this important species. It’s been a long time in coming. We thank the Fish and Wildlife Service for its work on this issue, for its decision, and for its confidence in state management.

Sincerely,

Scott Walker
Governor